

## **Changes to Canadian dietetic education in the past quarter-century**

*L. Mulsant<sup>1</sup>, M. Wyatt<sup>2</sup>, P. Brauer<sup>1</sup>, E. Dubois<sup>1</sup>, Q. Zhan<sup>1</sup>, L. Dietrich<sup>3</sup>, J. Randall Simpson<sup>1</sup>*

*<sup>1</sup>University of Guelph, Guelph, ON, <sup>2</sup>London, ON, <sup>3</sup>Haliburton, ON*

**Introduction:** There is a paucity of research about changes to dietetic education in Canada since 1993, when a book about Canadian dietetic history was published.

**Objectives:** To develop a timeline and conduct key informant interviews about changes to Canadian dietetic education since 1993.

**Methods:** A draft timeline was created based on a literature review and descriptions of changes in some programs provided by dietetic educators across Canada. Twenty-five dietetic educators, who were representative of Canadian practical training programs, were contacted; fifteen completed semi-structured audio-taped telephone interviews, using the draft timeline as a starting point. Recordings were transcribed and coded by five team members using thematic analysis and a social ecologic framework.

**Results:** The fifteen participants were involved in thirteen integrated and practicum programs in Ontario (n=5), British Columbia (n=2), Nova Scotia (n=2), Saskatchewan (n=1), Quebec (n=1), New Brunswick (n=1), and Yukon (n=1). They reported 12-42 years (mean [SD]: 25.2 [8.3]) of dietetic work experience with ~78% of workload dedicated to dietetic education. Five main meta-themes emerged from the interviews: (1) challenges with the traditional dietetic education model; (2) emergence of champions for change; (3) barriers and facilitators for change; (4) shift towards integration; and, (5) increasing access to services for diverse and expanding population needs. The interviews indicated these changes were driven by a desire to increase access to, and capacity and sustainability of, dietetic education.

**Conclusions:** Over the past quarter-century, through the efforts of champions for change, Canadian dietetic education has changed dramatically. It has increased its capacity and sustainability, improved access to professional designation, and better positioned the profession to meet the needs of diverse populations.

**Significance:** These findings will be used to inform dietitians and students about the history of the profession. A better understanding of dietetic education can also guide future developments.